

Document Citation

Title	The private jokes of Federico Fellini
Author(s)	Eugene Walter
Source	<i>Vogue</i>
Date	1965 Sep 01
Type	article
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	Fellini, Federico (1920-1993), Rimini, Emilia-Romagna, Italy Masina, Giulietta (1920-1994), Giorgio di Piano, Italy
Film Subjects	Giulietta degli spiriti (Juliet of the spirits), Fellini, Federico, 1965

THE PRIVATE JOKE OF FEDERICO FELLINI

BY EUGENE WALTER

The first surprising thing on a set where Fellini is filming is the utter absence of noise and confusion. Perhaps two hundred people—actors, technicians, hangers-on—are going about their duties in complete tranquillity. The other surprise is that one doesn't notice the camera. "Where is it?" one asks, thinking of Hollywood monsters. The small, flexible, moves on a portable track, can change position in a flash. Extraordinary each seeming to know exactly his part in the scheme of things. A cripple walks across the set by the legs: some picturesque character part, one assumes, but no, it's the parking-lot attendant. striped frock and apron carries a basket onto the set: assistant prop girl, surely. No. She plays the film: a maidservant and a martyred saint.

No mistaking the others, though. The Junoesque beauty Caterina Boratto is wearing high-buttoned spats and a huge hat of purple plumes, a filigree silver choker on a black ribbon. Valentina Cortese is all ruffles—throughout the film she wears the same costume, made up in various stuffs and colours, with a t held in place by a daisy. She looks just like one of the Pierrettes in Chéret's 1900 posters or vaudeville curtain. The impish Giulietta Masina is in a mandarin jacket of brocade with tight white pants and pointed white kid shoes. The film, called *Juliet of the Spirits*, is a showcase made to order for her comic-pathetic talents. Her sunshine-and-shower performance is already seen to be definitive, the triumph of her personal style. This new film is the concerto Fellini has always promised his wife. She is the intense, still centre of a vast frieze peopled by unusual talents and unexpected faces; the American actress Anne Francine plays a psychiatrist, the Afro-Cuban singer Wanani, known as "The Gazelle," sings an Oriental chant dressed in three crystal pendants and a lovely smile; seventeen nationalities are listed for the cast.

In real life, Giulietta and Federico Fellini live in a villa at Fregene, feed some thirty-odd cats in their garden, have a maid called Fortunata, entertain hordes of people, and are interested in games of charades and in spiritualism. In the film, Giulietta lives in a (larger) villa at Fregene, feeds a dozen (stuffed) cats in her (larger) garden, has two maids (both called Fortunata), entertains hordes of people who improvise psychodramas in her garden, and is involved in a vivid world of vision, dream, memory, hallucination. Aha! say the know-it-alls, it's autobiographical, like *8½*. But *8½* wasn't autobiographical and neither is *Juliet of the Spirits*. Both illustrate Fellini's passion for snatching up some bit of daily life as a point of departure for his vast private mythology. His films are autobiographical only in the sense that *King Lear* and *Krazy Kat* are. In the new film his reiterated themes are apparent: the differences between what people think, what they say, and what they do; the search for a small island of peace or silence amidst the unheeding hurly-burly of life today.

Fellini loves the quiet centre, but he loves equally the hurly-burly, and lovingly he composes it. Unfinished or interrupted conversation, non sequiturs, tracking shots that are seven or eight little scenes in hectic proximity. Always the furthest background and corner-of-the-eye is composed as carefully as the foreground of his frieze.

"More dewdrops," he shouts over a microphone, "on that hedge off there!"

In a sense Fellini is the last of the great nineteenth-century novelists. His is a peopled world. One is reminded of Dickens or Turgenev rather than of any Italian antecedent. Bruegel is his ancestor, too. He keeps reminding us, moreover, that the movies have given us a new vision of the world and a new set of humours. This new film, particularly, is a mad amalgamation of nostalgia for the cinematic myths of Mae West-Garbo-Dietrich-Keaton-Marx Brothers and a sharp and satirical sense of *now*.

Fellini thinks that no one has really seen *La Dolce Vita*. (Continued on page 232)

LEFT: THE GREAT SPINNER OF DREAM FILMS, FEDERICO FELLINI. AND, RIGHT, THE AUTHOR, EUGENE WALTER, SURROUNDED BY PHOTOGRAPHS OF CATERINA BORATTO (IN A BIG HAT), VALENTINA CORTESE (WITH DAISIES IN HER HAIR), AND, TOP, FELLINI'S WIFE, GIULIETTA MASINA, THE EXTRAORDINARY STAR OF THE NEW MOVIE *JULIET OF THE SPIRITS*.



JOHN PHILLIPS



FERRILL AMACKER



LEFT: ANTHONY POOL

